



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maria Caulfield MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Health & Social Care*

*39 Victoria Street
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Catherine McKenna
HM Coroner's Court
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OL16 1AT

10 May 2024

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths dated 7 February 2023 about the death of Ania Sohail. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for mental health and patient safety.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Ania's death and I offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention. Please accept my sincere apologies for the significant delay in responding to this matter.

Your report raises concerns about online prescribing, information sharing and the provision of care on Griffin Ward at Junction 17 (part of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust).

I understand that the Trust wrote to you on 4 April 2023 with the Trust's comprehensive response to the matters of concern that you raised in your report.

In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and NHS England.

The CQC was formally notified of Ania's death through a statutory notification from the Trust on 21 June 2021. CQC has subsequently carried out a series of inspections of the acute and psychiatric intensive care wards for working age adults (including Griffin Ward) in September 2021 to consider the safety of the wards and the care and treatment being provided to patients. These contributed to the Trust being placed into Segment 4 of the NHS Oversight Framework which meant it entered the national Recovery Support Programme and is now in receipt of mandated intensive support. An NHS England System Improvement Board was set up to support the delivery of the programme, chaired by the Regional Director for Strategy and Transformation for NHS North West, with representatives from the Trust, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, Care

Quality Commission, Health Education England, Bury Local Authority (as safeguarding lead), General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

The Trust has subsequently been the subject of an NHS England-commissioned independent investigation into the failings within the Trust's services reported at the Edenfield Centre and the failure within the organisation to appropriately manage concerns and mitigate against patient harm. The investigation's final report was published in January 2024 and notes that Griffin Ward has now been closed. The Trust has developed an improvement plan, which was updated to reflect the findings of the independent review. The report is available at: [Independent Review of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust](#)

From a national perspective, with regard to online prescribing, NHS England has advised that the NHS does everything in its capacity to take into account the plurality of healthcare provision that is available to the public in England. NHS England is supportive of a patient's rights to choose the providers they wish to use. For vulnerable patients, the right course of action is to advise them on the risks of using services outside of the NHS and the benefits of remaining within the NHS.

NHS England has no jurisdiction over private provision. Private providers would need a very good reason to breach a patient's refusal to share their information as they are legally obliged to safeguard sensitive information under the General Data Protection Regulation. The General Pharmaceutical Council has provided information to online pharmacies on *Providing medicines online*, which is available at: [Online Pharmacy Services \(rpharms.com\)](#)

The Summary Care Record (SCR) was originally designed and communicated as a means to support patients when they receive emergency care. Over time, the significant value of access to SCR to wider healthcare services has been recognised and, as a result, NHS England has worked with an Expert Advisory Committee to extend its use into multiple other care settings through a governance framework into which patients and professionals contribute.

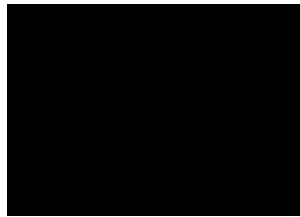
NHS England has also done significant work with a number of private sector organisations, including a range of private hospitals and privately funded healthcare services as part of Proof of Concepts (PoCs), into settings where SCRs have previously been unavailable. eg private GP Services. This work will continue throughout 2024. Whilst it is difficult to define precisely what is included within "private hospitals and privately funded healthcare services", all "private hospitals and independent healthcare services" that have approached NHS England to date seeking access to SCR have either been onboarded into the existing proof of concepts or there have been discussions with the requesters regarding initial setup and their use for access to SCR. Learnings from these PoCs will be reported back to the Expert Advisory Committee to better understand any benefits realised but also any potential unintended consequences. NHS England will work with the Expert Advisory Committee to seek full rollout approval in this sector and consider the scope of this approval and any specific exclusions, constraints, or caveats.

You may be interested to note that the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) issued a statement in January 2024 following concerns about the potential risks for patients using

online services to get medicines and treatment in a case that was similar to Ania's. In it the GPhC makes clear that it will take enforcement and regulatory action where appropriate against owners of registered pharmacies, as well as individual pharmacy professionals involved in both the prescribing and supply of medicines where their conduct may have fallen short of professional standards. The GPhC's statement is available at: [BBC News: investigation into safety checks online pharmacies carry out when selling prescription-only medicines | General Pharmaceutical Council \(pharmacyregulation.org\)](#)

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



MARIA CAULFIELD